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ABSTRACT

Findings presented in a lengthier evaluation report of a reorganized junior high program in Minneapolis during the 1971-72 school year are summarized. In the Jordan component of the program, two counselors coordinated six workshops attended by about half of the teachers who had at least one seventh grade class. Teachers reported improved contact with counselors during the 1971-72 school year from that of the previous year. A questionnaire administered to students indicated that students also had more contacts with the counselors during the 1971-72 school year than in the previous one and that the students had positive attitudes toward their counselor. Parental involvement did not increase over the two-year period. In the Marshall-University component, teacher-counselor teams were set up to work with half of the students in grades seven and eight. All teachers felt that the team approach helped meet the needs of some students and that the counselor was a useful member of the team. The majority of the students felt that the team concept was better for students than not having teachers and counselors work as a team. Parental comment toward the team concept was generally positive. (CK)

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Reorganized Junior High Program 1971-72: A Summary of Findings and Implications

A Title III, ESEA Project

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Minneapolis Public Schools

Reorganized Junior High Program 1971-72: A Summary of Findings and Implications

The goal of the Reorganized Junior High Program was to develop a positive, student-centered program that would facilitate development of all students. A major characteristic of the project was to change the role of the counselor from a traditional resource person to more of a team member and facilitator. Specifically, the objectives were improved counselor effectiveness; positive student attitudes towards teachers, counselors, and school; and increased parent and student involvement in school. ESEA Title III funds were used to hire an additional counselor and to provide staff development time for each of the two schools in the project, Jordan and Marshall-University Junior High Schools. This paper summarizes findings presented in a lengthier evaluation report[1] and discusses implications for guidance and counseling programs.

Jordan Component

Two experienced counselors, each working with half of the 370 seventh grade students, were involved with the project at Jordan Junior High. A seventh grade house was established by converting an unused classroom to counselor offices, a reception area, and a conference area. An assistant principal was no longer assigned to the seventh grade. All seventh grade concerns, including the usual administrative responsibility for student behavior, were funneled into the seventh grade office and the two seventh grade counselors.

Project Activities

The counselors coordinated six workshops attended by about half of the teachers who had at least one seventh grade class. Seventh grade staff concerns, priorities, and goals were identified at these workshops. One major outcome of these workshops was the development of a new report card system that emphasized individual student objectives and evaluations.

The counselors made an effort to increase the amount of working contacts with teachers. Between the two counselors they visited an average of 67 classrooms each week. About 80% of the teachers used the seventh grade conference

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[1] Johnson, Lary. Reorganized Junior High Program: An Evaluation 1971-72. Minneapolis Public Schools, September 1972. A copy of the report is available from the Minneapolis Public Schools' Research and Evaluation Department.

room at least once or twice a week. Although English, social studies, and math teachers did have common preparation periods with other teachers in their subject area, the master teaching schedule did not provide common preparation time for interdisciplinary team planning or for team planning by teachers with the same students.

When teachers compared the 1970-71 and 1971-72 seventh grade programs, the 1971-72 program received more favorable ratings on a number of variables. The teachers thought there was better communication between teachers, greater staff togetherness, better teacher-student communications, and greater interest in trying new ideas. However, very few changes in methods and materials were reported by the teachers.

Teacher Evaluation of Counselors

All teachers who taught at Jordan in both 1970-71 and 1971-72 said they had better contacts with counselors in 1971-72 than in 1970-71. To obtain a more accurate estimate of counselor-teacher working relationships, seventh grade teachers were asked in September 1971 to estimate the number and helpfulness of contacts they had with counselors during the previous 1970-71 school year in the following areas. The counselor:

Provided information about individual students
Provided a resource for referral of students who needed special help
Offered suggestions to help cope with students who were not adjusting
Participated in conferences concerning students
Observed the classroom
Actively participated in classroom activities
Helped develop appropriate classroom atmosphere
Helped plan curriculum

In May 1972 the teachers were asked to make similar estimates for the 1971-72 school year.

Teachers reported that the frequency of counselor-teacher contacts in 1971-72 was greater than in 1970-71 for all areas listed except "cooperatively planning curriculum." The majority of teachers had five or more contacts with a counselor in 1971-72 in the following areas: provided information about individual students, provided a referral resource for students who needed special help, offered suggestions that helped me cope with students who were not adjusting to class, observed the classroom, and participated in conferences

concerning students with problems. Although contacts were not frequent, 54% of the teachers also said the counselors suggested activities and methods to develop an appropriate classroom atmosphere.

Although most teachers who worked with the counselors in the listed areas indicated that the counselors were helpful in each area, the counselors were seen as most helpful in the more traditional areas where the counselors had the most contact with teachers--providing information about students, providing a referral resource for students who needed help, offering suggestions to cope with students who were not adjusting to class, and participating in case conferences. Teachers' ratings of counselor helpfulness in these four areas were more favorable in 1971-72 than in 1970-71.

On an overall scale, seventh grade teachers rated the counselors as being more helpful in 1971-72 than in 1970-71. Fifty-five percent of the teachers said the counselors were very helpful in 1971-72 compared with 12% in 1970-71.

Jordan Teachers' Rating of Overall Counselor Helpfulness

	1970-71 N=26 Percent	1971-72 N=29 Percent
Very helpful	12%	55%
Somewhat helpful	61	41
Not very helpful	27	4
Of no help	0	0

Teachers also were asked whether or not counselors and teachers should work together in each of the areas. Teachers unanimously agreed that the counselor should provide information about students, provide a referral resource, offer suggestions on how to cope with students, and participate in case conferences. A decided majority of the teachers also said counselors should observe the classroom (93%), participate in classroom activities (88%), help develop an appropriate classroom atmosphere (76%), and help plan curriculum (70%). Percentages in some areas were somewhat greater in 1971-72 than in 1970-71.

Student Perceptions of the Counselors

In May 1972 seventh grade students at Jordan were given a questionnaire that attempted to measure the kinds of contacts they had with their counselor,

student perceptions of the counselor's job, and student perceptions of the counselor as a person. The same questionnaire had been given to the eighth graders (1970-71 seventh graders) in September 1971. Students were asked to complete the questionnaire for the counselor they had the previous year as seventh graders.

The major findings were:

1. Students had more contacts with the counselors in 1971-72 than in the previous year. Students saw the counselors more frequently in the counselors' offices, in the hallways, and in the classrooms.
2. In 1971-72 the types of student-counselor contacts and student perceptions of what activities were part of the counselor's job reflected the counselor's responsibility for handling all student situations. More students in 1971-72 than in 1970-71 indicated that they talked with their counselor because they broke the school rules. More than half of the 1971-72 seventh graders compared with one-fifth of the 1970-71 seventh graders thought it was the counselor's job to discipline and suspend students when they got in trouble.
3. Although a majority of the 1971-72 students expressed positive attitudes toward their counselor and the counseling relationship, the 1971-72 students had less favorable attitudes than did the 1970-71 students. A lesser percentage of 1971-72 students than 1970-71 students perceived their counselor as understanding, interested, genuine, and approachable.
4. Some differences in students' overall ratings of counselor helpfulness occurred, as indicated below.

Overall Rating of Counselor Helpfulness by Jordan Seventh Grade Students in 1970-71 and 1971-72

	1970-71 N=337 Percent	1971-72 N=298 Percent
Very helpful to students	45%	37%
Sometimes helpful to students	26	37
Of no help to students	2	3
More harmful than helpful to students	2	5
I don't know	25	18

Student Attitudes Toward School and Teachers

The project year students responded somewhat more positively than the previous year's students to items on the Student Opinion Questionnaire, a survey questionnaire which measures student attitudes toward school.

Class discussions were viewed more favorably by the project students than by students in the previous year. Sixty-six percent of the 1971-72 students, compared with 43% of the 1970-71 students, said the lectures and class discussions by their teachers were clear and worthwhile. The project year students responded more positively than the previous year students to eleven of the twelve items related to teachers. As an example, 57% of the students in 1971-72, compared with 49% in 1970-71, said most of their teachers were excellent. There was little difference between the two years on the Liking-of-School items. About half of the students responded positively to these items.

Parent and Student Involvement

Other than increased written communications to all parents and increased contact with individual parents reported by the counselors and some of the teachers, there was no evidence that the amount of parent involvement with the seventh grade program was greater in 1971-72 than in previous years.

There also was no record of any activities that indicated that student involvement and input into the school was greater in 1971-72 than in previous years. Although the seventh grade staff discussed increased student involvement through the development of extra-curricular activities and student government, their ideas were not put into action. About half of the students said they participated in decisions regarding what they did in their classrooms. The responses were somewhat less favorable in 1971-72 than in 1970-71.

Marshall-University Component

The Marshall-University component of the Reorganized Junior High Program was organized differently than the Jordan component. Several Marshall-University teachers had previous experience with teacher-counselor team approaches and were expecting to work as part of a team in 1971-72. Teacher-counselor teams were set up to work with half of the students in grades seven and eight. At each grade level the team consisted of a counselor and four teachers, one each from English, mathematics, science, and social studies. At the beginning of the year, it was made clear that the counselor was seen as one of the team members and not as any greater facilitator or coordinator than any of the other team members. An assistant principal was assigned to the seventh and eighth

grade students. His role in relation to the team members was not defined clearly. The seventh and eighth grade teams coordinated the support services for the team students and usually made the decision regarding the handling of individual team students, although they regularly consulted with other support personnel in the school; social workers, school psychologists, reading specialists, and administrators.

The schedule for the team students and team teachers permitted some flexible scheduling. The ninety students in each team were divided into four groups. Each team student was scheduled into English, math, science, and social studies in four consecutive 45-minute periods during the same three hours with the same teachers and with the same group of students in each class. The two most obvious advantages of this schedule were that the team teachers had the same students, and the classes could easily be reorganized within time periods or across time periods to meet instructional needs.

Project Activities

Team meetings were the core of the Reorganized Junior High Program at Marshall University. The four teachers on each team had a common preparation time every day before they met with their four team classes. With few exceptions the team teachers and the team counselor met daily during this common time. The team used this common time to discuss individual student situations, share techniques, develop new evaluation systems, set team objectives, and discuss instructional approaches. The team also spent time on group processes to work out interpersonal problems that arose. Further work in these areas was done at workshops held during the year.

The team teachers felt the team organization resulted in togetherness rather than isolation, group rapport and support, team spirit, and a stronger voice as a team than as individuals.

All teachers felt that the team approach helped meet the needs of some students, particularly in the pupil personnel services area. Teachers received more information on individual students and were able to see the students from different viewpoints. This sharing of information resulted in a unified approach to individual students.

Most teachers said they did not alter their group instructional techniques as a result of being team members, although several said they modified their treatment of individuals as a result of sharing viewpoints with other team

members. Few changes were made in the curriculum. Each team tried an interdisciplinary activity, but they did not feel they were successful. Some teachers said they coordinated their subject materials to avoid overlap with and to build on other subject areas. Most changes were related to how the materials was taught (mini-units for example) rather than changes in material and content. Most teachers felt the team was too busy with pupil personnel problems and group maintenance functions to find enough time to plan curriculum changes.

Teacher Evaluation of Counselors

The teachers said that the counselor was a necessary and a useful member of the team. As a team member the counselor contributed information about students, provided a viewpoint from outside the classroom, and shared information obtained from teachers who were not on the team. The counselor served as a liaison to parents, administrators, and to outside referral sources. He also followed through on individuals or situations and scheduled appointments and conferences. Some teachers indicated that the counselor was more effective in the team role than in the more traditional role. One teacher said the counselor was in their pitching with the teachers.

All seventh and eighth grade teachers were asked in September 1971 to estimate the number and helpfulness of contacts they had with counselors during the previous 1970-71 year. In May 1972 the same teachers were asked to make similar estimates for the 1971-72 school year.

The combined estimates by seventh and eighth grade teachers were separated into three groups: all 1970-71 teachers, 1971-72 team teachers, and 1971-72 non-team teachers. The frequency of teacher-counselor contacts reported by the 1971-72 team teachers was greater than that reported by 1971-72 non-team teachers and 1970-71 teachers in all listed areas. All eight team teachers reported five or more contacts with the counselors in the following areas: provided information about individual students, participated in conferences concerning students with problems, and helped plan activities and methods to develop an appropriate classroom atmosphere. The team teachers reported at least one contact with counselors in the other listed areas: provided a referral resource for students who needed special help, offered suggestions to help me cope with students, observed the classroom, participated in classroom activities, and helped plan curriculum.

The counselors were rated as more helpful by the 1971-72 team teachers

than by the 1971-72 non-team and 1970-71 teachers in the three pupil personnel service areas: providing information about individual students, providing a referral resource for students who need special help, and participating in conferences concerning students with problems.

The three groups of teachers almost unanimously agreed on the appropriateness of the counselor's role in the more traditional areas; providing information, being a referral resource, offering coping suggestions, and participating in case conferences. Also, about 80% of each group said counselors should observe the classroom, and about half said counselors should actively participate in classroom activities. A greater percentage of 1971-72 team teachers (86%) than either 1971-72 non-team teachers (about 60%) or 1970-71 teachers (about 60%) said counselors should suggest or cooperatively plan curriculum and should help plan activities to develop an appropriate classroom atmosphere.

The counselors were rated as more helpful by 1971-72 team teachers than by either 1971-72 non-team or 1970-71 teachers on a general helpfulness question. Seventy-five percent of the team teachers said the counselors were very helpful, compared with 56% of the 1971-72 non-team teachers and 27% of the 1970-71 teachers.

Marshall-University Seventh and Eighth Grade Teacher Ratings of Overall Counselor Helpfulness

	All Teachers 1970-71 N=33 Sept. 1971	Team 1971-72 N=8 May 1972	NonTeam 1971-72 N=36 May 1972
Very helpful	27%	75%	56%
Somewhat helpful	45	25	28
Not very helpful	21	0	17
Of no help	6	0	0

Student Perceptions of the Counselor

Both the team and non-team seventh and eighth graders at Marshall-University completed a questionnaire in May 1972 that attempted to measure the kinds of contacts they had with their counselor and the students' perceptions of the counselor as a person. The same questionnaire had been given to the 1970-71 seventh graders in May 1971.

The frequency of student contact with the counselors was about the same in 1971-72 as in 1970-71.

On items regarding the counselor as a person and the counseling relationship, the counselors were viewed somewhat more favorably by the team students than by the non-team students, particularly in the seventh grade. As examples, at seventh grade, 83% of the team and 74% of the non-team students agreed that the counselor understood them, 80% of the team and 59% of the non-team students felt comfortable talking with their counselor, and 93% of the team compared with 64% of the non-team students said their counselor tried to get them to be responsible for what they do.

The counselors were rated most favorably by the 1970-71 seventh graders and the 1971-72 non-team eighth graders on an overall measure of counselor helpfulness.

Overall Rating of Counselor Helpfulness by Marshall-University Seventh and Eighth Grade Students in 1970-71 and 1971-72

	1970-71	1971-72 Grade 7		1971-72 Grade 8	
	Grade 7 N=138	Team N=75	Non Team N=65	Team N=74	Non Team N=58
Very helpful	60%	45%	47%	42%	58%
Sometimes helpful	25	30	31	42	23
Of no help	1	0	0	3	2
I don't know	15	25	22	12	18

Student Attitudes Toward School and Teachers

The majority of the team students in seventh grade (55%) and eighth grade (64%) felt that the team concept was better for students than not having teachers and counselors work as a team. An even greater majority said they would like to have their teachers work together as a team next year.

The 1971-72 team students expressed a more positive attitude toward school than did the 1971-72 non-team students and the 1970-71 students. On the Student Opinion Questionnaire, a greater percentage of 1971-72 team students indicated they liked school, were interested in learning, and had positive attitudes toward class discussions and their teachers. Although the team arrangement might have been a contributing factor to the more positive attitudes expressed by the team students, there are other uncontrolled factors which

might have been causally related. The team and non-team students might have been different on important variables at the beginning of the school year. Initial differences in team and non-team teacher characteristics might have been responsible for part or most of the differences in student attitudes.

Student and Parent Involvement

Although the eighth grade team students had the opportunity to select mini-units and gave suggestions for future mini-units, there is no documentation of any other activities that indicates involvement and input into the school program by the 1971-72 seventh and eighth grade team students was greater than in previous years. However, the responses of the team students to the six "input" items on the Student Opinion Questionnaire were more favorable than responses of non-team students and students in the previous year.

As an example, 70% of the 1971-72 seventh grade team students said they helped make decisions in their classes, compared with 42% of the 1971-72 non-team seventh graders and 59% of the 1970-71 seventh graders.

Most of the parent contact with the Reorganized Junior High Program appeared to be related to individual student situations rather than involvement with the school program.

A questionnaire was mailed to all parents of team students at the end of the year to determine the extent of their awareness and satisfaction with the team program. Questionnaires were returned by about half of the parents.

Three-fourths or more of the responding parents of team students were aware of the team's composition, were aware that their child was part of the team program, and said that their child had mentioned that his teachers were working together as a team.

All but a few of the parent comments regarding the worth of the team concept at the junior high level were positive.

Discussion

Although the Reorganized Junior High evaluation findings were the stimulus for this section, the following remarks are not limited to the data.

1. It appears that counselors should make efforts to spend more time working with teachers. A major operational objective of the project was to increase the amount of contact counselors had with teachers. This objective was attained and its achievement was viewed favorably by the teachers. Teachers

rated counselors much higher on a helpfulness scale after the project than before. However, teacher ratings of counselor helpfulness should be viewed cautiously, since the ratings for the 1970-71 school year were made retrospectively in September 1971.

In addition to the more traditional counselor functions of providing information about students, being a referral resource, offering suggestions on how to cope with students, and participating in case conferences, the majority of the teachers also felt that it was appropriate for counselors to help plan activities to develop an appropriate classroom atmosphere, to observe the classroom, to actively participate in classroom activities, and to help plan curriculum. Changing the role of the counselor in these directions raises some questions. Is the counselor trained to work effectively with teachers in the classroom situation? In addition to the usual interpersonal communication skills, it would seem that, at a minimum, a counselor would have to be familiar with group processes within the classroom, behavior modification techniques, and current instructional strategies.

Should the counselor attempt to be a leader (change agent)? At one of the schools, the counselor was viewed as one of the team members, with no greater leadership role than other team members. In other situations it may be necessary and valuable for the counselor to take a more activie role as leader, implementor, and facilitator.

Will counselors be more effective in an expanded role that calls for a greater emphasis on working with teachers than in the more traditional role of working directly with students? Since the major outcomes of any educational institution are related to students needs, evaluation of counselor roles will have to determine to what degree student objectives in the educational, vocational, and social domains have been attained. Since teachers are the major treatment that leads to the attainment of student outcomes, it seems reasonable that counselors should spend a considerable amount of their time with teachers.

Although it was not specifically stated in the project proposal, an assumed goal was that teachers would become more effective at handling student situations within their classroom, resulting in fewer referrals to resource and administrative personnel.

2. Teachers at both schools not only expressed positive feelings about working more closely with counselors, they also felt the opportunity to work more closely with other teachers was beneficial. Another unstated objective behind the proposal was that teachers and students would experience a greater

control over their own destiny.

However, if teachers are to work together as a unit, it seems essential that the master teaching schedule must provide certain conditions. The team concept employed at Marshall University has most of these conditions. There are a minimum number of different teachers at each grade level, the team teachers have the same students, the classes meet during the same consecutive blocks of time, and the team has a common meeting time during the school day. One positive aspect of the team approach, development of spirit and support within the team, has some potential negative aspects. The members of the team must be willing and able to deal with the conflicts that arise from the close interpersonal working conditions. The counselor should be able to provide leadership in working through these problems.

3. Was the junior high program changed to better meet the needs of the students? Perhaps it would be unfair to expect any major changes after one year of a project. Although the staffs at both schools were interested in making changes, a large portion of their time was spent on pupil personnel activities with individual students. No major changes in curriculum were made. A few changes or experiments with different instructional methods were attempted. Both schools developed more individualized student evaluation reports. There was not enough time to both carry out pupil personnel functions and complete extensive changes in the curriculum.

Although there were a number of uncontrolled factors, the students at one school who were exposed to the program responded more positively to school than did students who were not in the program.

4. The role of the assistant principal in relation to teacher-counselor teams needs additional study. If the teams are assuming the major responsibility for handling individual student situations, how does the assistant principal fit in? As a team member and/or resource person? As the ultimate disciplinarian where extreme action is deemed necessary by the team? Also, will problems develop if the assistant principal handles individual students differently than the team members because he is unaware of team plans? What responsibilities does the assistant principal have as an instructional leader?

5. If there is no assistant principal and the counselor or team assumes responsibility for all student behavior situations, other difficulties may arise. Can the counselor handle both the role of disciplinarian (for lack of better word) and the role of the traditional counselor. A. Jordan, where the

counselors assumed this responsibility, some problems have arisen. About half of the students said it is the counselor's job to discipline or suspend students when they get in trouble. Although the majority of the students had positive feelings toward the counselors, fewer students in the project year than in the previous year said the counselors were understanding and were interested in what they had to say, while more students said the counselors tried to tell them what to do.

According to the current view held by many individuals, this latter trend is not good. On the other hand, there is little evidence to indicate that it is maximally beneficial for <u>all</u> students to have completely positive views of the counselor and the counseling relationship. Perhaps some students may benefit more from a different approach.

It also may be possible that the counselors could handle both roles (or more accurately stated, they could develop one new role) if they behaved differently. In other words, perhaps they did not do the right things with the right students. Again, an assumption underlying the project was that the counselor would actively strive to develop a positive school environment that emphasized a positive approach to students. Negative, disciplinarian behavior would be replaced by positive, reinforcing activities. Obviously, more research has to be done in this area before it is labeled as a good or poor practice.

However, it does seem clear that one individual, such as a counselor, cannot effectively handle all student situations by himself. A promising alternative is the team approach, where the counselor and teachers work together to develop the most effective approach for a particular individual or group situation.